

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 17, 1858.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. EVANS submitted the following

REPORT.

*The Committee on Revolutionary Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Sarah Smith Stafford, only daughter of James B. Stafford, an officer in the navy of the revolution, having had the same under consideration, beg leave to submit the following report :*

The petitioner represents herself to be the only daughter of James B. Stafford, who was a midshipman, and acted as lieutenant on board the *Alliance*, a vessel of war during the American revolution, commanded by Commodore Barry.

Whilst cruising off the coast of Ireland, he was selected by his commander to undertake the hazardous and perilous enterprise of carrying to Henry Laurens, then a prisoner in the tower of London, an important despatch from the Congress of the United States. He was accordingly landed in the night time at Wexford, from whence, by the aid of friends, he travelled on foot under a disguise to London, where, by the assistance of a relative, he procured admission to the tower, safely delivered his message, and succeeded in making his way back to Wexford, and from thence on board of the *Alliance*, which had been cruising off the coast during his absence. These facts are supported by as satisfactory evidence as could be reasonably expected after so long a time. The prayer of the petition is, that, in consideration of this important and perilous service, the petitioner, as his daughter, may be paid the half-pay of a lieutenant in the army.

It requires no argument to prove that this case is not embraced within any of the resolutions granting half-pay to the officers of the army who served to the end of the war. The reasons which induced this offer did not apply to the navy. Whilst the officers of the army were daily leaving the army in order to provide subsistence for their suffering families at home, which their depreciated pay did not enable them to do, the officers of the navy were reaping large profits from the captures made on the high seas. It appears from the journals of Congress that the sales in France of the prizes captured by the *Bonne Homme Richard* and the *Alliance* amounted to a large sum, (see 4th

Jour., 653,) of which it is presumed Lieutenant Stafford received his share. It appears, also, from the journal of Congress that the half-pay of the officers was refused by the Congress on the 16th of May, 1785, on the application of the widow of John Young, commander of the sloop of war Saratoga. There is no claim of right; and if anything is granted, it must be a gratuity.

The question, therefore, presented by the petition is, whether there is anything in the case so peculiar as to require a departure from the course heretofore pursued. There is no doubt the services rendered were meritorious, and accompanied by hazard; but if Congress were to undertake at this time to give gratuitous rewards to the children and grandchildren of all who rendered like service during the revolution, the treasury, even if full, would be insufficient to satisfy all the demands upon it.

Your committee are of opinion that it is the duty of Congress to satisfy every just demand, and to fulfill every promise made to those who periled all to achieve our independence, but there is no obligation or expediency which requires or authorizes the extension of its benevolence to those who rendered no service, and whose only claim is derived from those who never asked any reward themselves; they, therefore, recommend that the prayer of the petitioner be refused.